

A GALA IN THREE-QUARTER TIME
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: WASHINGTON'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE NEW YORK CITY OPERA COMPANY WAS CELEBRATED RECENTLY (THURSDAY, MAY 4) WITH THE LYRICAL STRAINS OF FRANZ LEHAR'S EVER POPULAR OPERA, "THE MERRY WIDOW," IN A GALA BENEFIT FOR THE COMPANY AT THE KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS. MAKING HER ONLY APPEARANCE IN WASHINGTON THIS SEASON IN THE TITLE ROLE WAS AMERICA'S OWN QUEEN OF THE OPERA STAGE, BEVERLY SILLS, WHOSE GLORIOUS VOICE AND ENCHANTING ACTING MADE HER A MOST ROMANTIC AND TUNEFUL "WIDOW". DETAILS FROM VOA'S BRIGID LAY.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- MUSIC: MERRY WIDOW WALTZ WITH SILLS AND TITUS:
AS DESIRED

VOICE: FRANZ LEHAR'S MAGICAL SCORE, WITH ITS LILTING WALTZ MELODIES AND LUSH ORCHESTRATION MAKE "THE MERRY WIDOW" ONE OF THE MOST DELIGHTFUL OF LIGHT OPERAS. AND, IF THIS WERE NOT ENOUGH, THE VISION OF BEVERLY SILLS, WITH REGAL CARRIAGE, FLASHING SMILE AND A ROBE OF FROSTY, WHITE FRILLS CASCADING TO THE FLOOR, MAKES THE COMBINATION OF SONG AND STAR AND SPECTACLE, IRRESTIBLE.

PLAYING OPPOSITE SILLS, IN THE ROLE OF THE DASHING BUT RELUCTANT LOVER, DANILO, IN THIS LIGHTHEARTED COMEDY OF A RICH AND BEAUTIFUL WIDOW, HER SUITORS AND THE MARITAL MIX-UPS OF HER FRIENDS, TRANSPORTED FROM THE MYTHICAL COUNTRY OF PETROVENIA TO NAUGHTY, GAY PAREE (PARIS), IS BARITONE,

VOICE:
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ALAN TITUS. HE IS WELL-REMEMBERED IN WASHINGTON, D.C. FOR HIS ROLE AS THE "CELEBRANT" IN LEONARD BERNSTEIN'S "MASS," THE COMMISSIONED WORK WHICH OPENED THE KENNEDY CENTER, AND FOR APPEARANCES WITH THE WASHINGTON OPERA SOCIETY. /

IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT, THE NEW YORK CITY OPERA'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, JULIUS RUDEL, ADDED HIS OWN MUSICAL HERITAGE OF VIENNA, TO GIVE THE FLAVOR OF THE TWIN ROMANTIC CAPITALS OF EUROPE IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THIS CENTURY -- VIENNA AND PARIS.

THIS NEW PRODUCTION, MOUNTED ESPECIALLY FOR BEVERLY SILLS, AND DIRECTED BY TITO CAPOBIANCO, CAME TO THE KENNEDY CENTER FROM SAN DIEGO (CALIFORNIA) WHERE IT WAS FIRST SEEN. SILLS, HOWEVER, IS NO STRANGER TO THE ROLE. IN FACT, SHE FIRST SANG THE "WIDOW" AT THE AGE OF 17 IN A TOURING COMPANY. SOME 200 PERFORMANCES SINCE THEN HAVE GIVEN HER AN EASY AND ABSOLUTE COMMAND OVER EVERY NUANCE OF INTONATION. LET'S LISTEN FOR A MOMENT TO HER INTERPRETATION OF THE BEAUTIFUL SONG, "VILIA" (THOU FAIR, WOODLAND SPRITE)

TAPE: CUT TWO -- VILIA (AS DESIRED)

VOICE: AS TO THE OPERA ITSELF, IT SEEMS AMAZING TO AUDIENCES TODAY THAT WHEN IT WAS FIRST PRODUCED IN 1905, ENTHUSIASM WAS LUKEWARM, TO SAY THE LEAST. THE MANAGER OF THE THEATER AN DER WIEN (VIENNA THEATER) OFFERED COMPOSER LEHAR 5,000 CROWNS TO WITHDRAW THE WORK. LEHAR REFUSED. THE FIRST PRODUCTION STRUGGLED THROUGH 50 PERFORMANCES, AIDED BY A LAVISH DISTRIBUTION OF FREE SEATS, BUT BY THE BEGINNING OF 1907, IT HAD BEEN PLAYED IN NEARLY EVERY CITY IN THE GERMAN-

VOICE:
(CONT'D)

SPEAKING WORLD. SINCE THEN, "THE MERRY WIDOW" HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO AT LEAST 25 LANGUAGES AND SHEET MUSIC AND RECORDS SALES HAVE RUN INTO THE MILLIONS. IT HAS BEEN PERFORMED ON WATER, ON ICE, AS A BALLET -- WITH ENGLAND'S PRIMA BALLERINA, MARGOT FONTEYN -- AND IN A NUMBER OF MOTION PICTURES.

JUDGING BY THE TUMULTUOUS APPLAUSE THAT GREETED BEVERLY SILLS AND THE STRONG SUPPORTING CAST PRESENTED BY THE NEW YORK CITY OPERA, IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL, THE LOVELY, LYRICAL, FASCINATING LADY, THE "MERRY WIDOW" WILL CONTINUE TO DELIGHT AUDIENCES FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

IN ITS TWO-WEEK ENGAGEMENT AT THE KENNEDY CENTER, THE NEW YORK CITY OPERA IS GIVING WORKS FROM THE CLASSIC REPERTOIRE, INCLUDING TWO THAT HAVE BEEN ABSENT FROM THE OPERA STAGE FOR SOME YEARS, PUCCINI'S "GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST" AND RIMSKY-KORSAKOV'S "LE COQ D'OR." (THE GOLDEN COCKEREL)

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BML/RCS